

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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R 021520Z MAY 75

FM AMCONSUL CALI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1341

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMCONSULATE MEDELLIN

UNCLAS CALI 0202

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, CO

SUBJ: CUEVAS REELECTED PRESIDENT OF UNION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS

(UTC).

1. TULIO CUEVAS, PRESIDENT OF THE UTC SINCE 1963 WAS REELECTED TO THAT POSITION ON THE LAST DAY OF THE UTC CONGRESS HELD IN CALI APRIL 27-MAY 1. CUEVAS RECEIVED 55 PERCENT OF THE 765 VOTES CAST BY THE DELEGATES VERSUS 43 PERCENT FOR ALVARO RAMIREZ PINILLA, PRESIDENT OF THE CUNDINAMARCA FEDERATION UTRACUN. TWO PERCENT OF THE VOTES WERE BLANK. IN KEEPING WITH THE DISCORD MARKING THE ENTIRE CONGRESS, RAMIREZ, UTRACUN, AND THE OTHER SEVEN DELEGATIONS SUPPORTING HIM, INCLUDING THE FEDERATIONS FROM SANTANDER, SANTANDER DEL NORTE, MAGDALENA AND BOYACA, ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE 22-MEMBER EXECUTIVE BOARD (THEY COULD EXPECT 5 POSITIONS) AND CALLED FOR OTHER UNIONS, IN AND OUT OF THE UTC, TO JOIN THEM IN REFORMING THAT ORGANIZATION. THEY THEN WALKED OUT OF THE CONGRESS. ALTHOUGH THE DISSIDENTS DID NOT ANNOUNCE ANY INTENTION TO DISAFFILIATE FROM THE UTC, AS SOME OBSERVERS HAD PREVIOUSLY FORECAST, A LONG-TIME UTC MEMBER SPECULATED TO THE EMBASSY LABOR OFFICER THAT RAMIREZ AND HIS SUPPORTERS MIGHT EVENTUALLY LEAVE THE UTC TO FORM ANOTHER CONFEDERATION WITH INDEPENDENTS AND SOME CURRENT

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AFFILIATES OF THE COLOMBIAN WORKERS CONFEDERATION (CTC).

2. APPARENTLY TRYING TO AVOID A SPLIT IN THE UTC, CUEVAS, WHO PRIOR TO THE CONGRESS HAD SAID HE WOULD NOT RUN FOR REELECTION, CONDUCTED HIMSELF IN A CONCILIATORY MANNER UNTIL THE FINAL DAY. HE MET WITH RAMIREZ ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS ATTEMPTING TO WORK OUT AN ARRANGEMENT PERMITTING THE TWO FORCES TO SUBMIT ONE SLATE OF CANDIDATES INCLUDING TWO PRESIDENTS AND TWO SECRETARIES-GENERAL AS WELL AS PARITY REPRESENTATION FOR THE REST OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD. HOWEVER, THE MAJORITY OF THE DELEGATES REJECTED THIS PROPOSAL, THUS FORCING THE SHOWDOWN.

3. THE CONGRESS GOT OFF TO AN UNRULY START APRIL 27. CUEVAS WAS SUBJECTED TO CONSTANT SHOUTING FROM DELEGATES AND SPECTATORS IN THE GALLERY DURING A 45-MINUTE SPEECH. BECAUSE OF THE NOISE THE DELEGATES WERE UNABLE TO HEAR THE CONTENT OF THE SPEECH. THE GALLERY HAD BEEN PACKED BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE VALLE WITH SUPPORTERS OF PRESIDENT LOPEZ, WHO ALSO ADDRESSED THE CONGRESS. CUEVAS LATER ACCUSED THE GOVERNOR OF PURPOSELY TRYING TO DISRUPT THE CONGRESS. HE CLAIMED THAT EXTREMIST ELEMENTS, INCLUDING MEMBERS OF THE MAOIST INDEPENDENT AND REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS MOVEMENT (MOIR) HAD INFILTRATED THE CROWD. (SECURITY PRECAUTIONS DURING THE REST OF THE PROCEEDINGS WERE EXTREMELY TIGHT).

4. THE OTHER DAYS OF THE CONGRESS WERE EQUALLY DISRUPTIVE. ANTI AND PRO-CUEVAS DELEGATES CONSTANTLY ENGAGED IN SHOUTING MATCHES WHICH PARTICULARLY ON APRIL 28 VERY NEARLY LED TO VIOLENCE. BOTH CUEVAS AND RAMIREZ ADDRESSED THE DELEGATES ON THAT DAY IN ORDER TO CALM PASSIONS.

5. SEVERAL DELEGATES CLAIMED THAT THE ENVIRONMENT DURING THIS CONGRESS WAS THE MOST HOSTILE THEY HAD WITNESSED AND OBSERVED

THAT ALTHOUGH CUEVAS WAS AGAIN REELECTED, THE SIZE OF THE OPPOSITION VOTE INDICATED THAT HE HAD A LOT OF FENCEMENDING TO TAKE CARE OF. THE COMPOSITION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD WILL BE DETERMINED MAY 3. IT IS EXPECTED TO INCLUDE AGAIN JORGE CARRILLO AS SECRETARY GENERAL.

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